

Remarks:

The above amendments and these remarks are responsive to the final Office action dated March 20, 2006.

Prior to entry of the present Amendment, claims 1-43 and 45-49 remained pending in the present application. Claims 1, 2, 7-13, 16, 17, 22-27 and 32-37 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) based on Cillessen et al. (US 5,744,864). Claims 3, 5, 6, 18, 20, 21, 28, 30, 31, 40-43, 45-47 and 49 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) based on Cillessen et al. variously in view of Minami et al. (Japanese Journal of Applied Physics, Vol. 23, pp. L 1693-1696 (1994)) and Ando et al. (US 6,184,946). Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections.

Nevertheless, applicants note with appreciation that the Examiner has indicated that claims 4, 14, 15, 19, 29, 38, 39 and 48 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include the features of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicant thus has amended claims 4, 14, 19, 29, 38 and 48 to place such claims in independent form. Claims 6-9, 11, 12, 21-24, 26 and 31-37 have been amended to depend from newly independent claims 4, 19 and 29 (claims 15 and 39 depend from claims 14 and 38, respectively). Claims 4, 6-9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 19, 21-24, 26, 29, 31-39 and 48 thus are understood to be in allowable form.

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Claims 1-3, 5, 10, 13, 16-18, 20, 25, 27, 28, 30, 40-43, 45-47 and 49 are cancelled without prejudice to further prosecution in this or another application in the interest of furthering the present application to allowance.

Regarding applicants' prior-submitted Information Disclosure Statement (dated March 3, 2006), applicants note that an Information Disclosure Statement was filed on May 5, 2006, such Information Disclosure Statement having been submitted to identify the prior-identified references (in the Information Disclosure Statement dated March 3, 2006) in compliance with 37 C.F.R. 1.98. Applicants also filed an Information Disclosure Statement on May 4, 2006 to identify a further reference. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner consider all of the references identified in the Information Disclosure Statements before the next Office Communication or Notice of Allowability.

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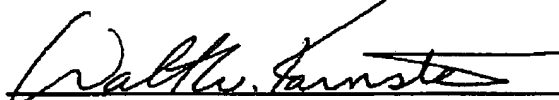
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Applicants believe that this application is now in condition for allowance, in view of the above amendments and remarks. Accordingly, applicants respectfully request that the Examiner issue a Notice of Allowability covering the pending claims. If the Examiner has any questions, or if a telephone interview would in any way advance prosecution of the application, please contact the undersigned attorney of record.

Respectfully submitted,

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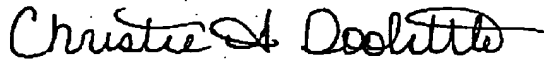
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CERTIFICATE OF FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being facsimile transmitted to Examiner J. Mondt, Group Art Unit 3663, Assistant Commissioner for Patents, at facsimile number (571) 273-8300 on May 17, 2006.



Christie A. Doolittle

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